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Wiki Post #6

2/22/12

*Three Cups of Tea*

By: Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

Summary:

This book follows a time in the life of one of the authors, Greg Mortenson. At the beginning of the novel we learn that he has failed at his attempt of reaching the top of K2, which is the world’s second highest mountain. He felt defeated and unworthy because he had wanted to put a necklace on the summit for his late sister, Christa, who died at a young age. On his way back down the mountain he becomes lost and is taken in by Haji Ali. After descending the mountain he stays at their house for a while and learns more about their community. He realizes how unfortunate they are and how his average American life is so much better. It is then that he decides he wants to build a school for Korphe. When he was younger Greg moved around a lot with his family and went into the military after high school. He had many experiences but eventually fell in love with climbing, which was why he attempted K2. Back home in California, Greg was wondering how he would fulfill the promise of a school for Korphe. He sends many letters to large organizations or people he thought might help his cause. He sent over 500 letters total. Eventually he received a phone call that came from a wealthy scientist who said he would fund the $12,000 cost of the school. Once he has the money he travels to Pakistan and tries to save as much money as possible. He goes around and looks for all the materials he needs to purchase with the help of Abdul. He also learns about Muslim customs and traditions in his time there. Mortenson travels with his supplies and keeps them at a friend’s house in Skardu, who also want a school. However, Mortenson promised the school for Korphe. Once he arrives in Korphe they are very excited for the school, but they also want a bridge built. Mortenson must now think of a way to build them a school as well as a bridge.

Analysis:

This part of the book was quite interesting, and unlike what I expected the book to be. Just from reading the title and the caption underneath, “One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace…One School at a Time”, I figured the book was going to detail the lives of Pakistanis and enlighten readers about their hardships. However, the book is more about the American man who is trying to make a change, which I wasn’t expecting. Nevertheless it’s interesting to read a book from this perspective. Usually books about foreign countries are written by someone who has simply done research or maybe visited the country, but this book gives you a whole new perspective because it is about someone who is personally making a change in the country. In the beginning it was a little boring because it was just talking about him descending the mountain that he couldn’t summit, but then after reading more you realize that part is important because of the impact it made on him. This part of the book shows the beginning steps in the process of making the school and how one ordinary American man can make a lot of change in a desperate village.

Application:

The objective of understanding human roles and behavior is shown in both the main character, Greg, and also the natives of the Pakistani village that he meets. Greg is just an average guy, he isn’t rich and he isn’t famous, yet he takes it upon himself to make a school for a village thousands of miles from his home. While most people aren’t that generous and selfless, the trait of being kind and charitable to the less fortunate is seen a lot throughout the world. When Greg is standing with Haji Ali during the time he had taken him into his home he says, “I *will* build you a school. I promise” (pg. 33). This dedication to a task is very noble, and there are many examples of that on many different scales. For example, when the earthquake hit Haiti in 2010, many organizations and other countries came to their aid in their time of need. On a much smaller scale, every small city and town does their part in helping the needy, with fundraisers and soup kitchens and other kinds of community service. While some people can be more selfish than others, it is in our nature as humans to want to help others who are less fortunate than we are. In addition, the chief of the village, Haji Ali, welcomes Greg into his home and gives him everything he needs during his time of need. This shows that even in other countries the sense of hospitality is the same and people always look out for each other. There are definitely times where this does not occur, but for the most part I would say it is an inherent human characteristic.